



March 2, 2009

Dear Harvard Graduate School of Education Principal Program participant,

As you explore programs to introduce your students to the possibilities of educational opportunities beyond high school, I would like to inform you about the Harvard Alumni Association's Early College Awareness program (ECA). This is one of the community service programs various Harvard Clubs organize around the country and possibly in your area.

The Early College Awareness program was initiated in the early 1990's by a Harvard College Admissions officer to educate middle school students from disadvantaged areas on the educational opportunities beyond high school. ECA strives to educate students and parents/guardians of the financial resources, supporting organizations and curricular planning available to make the dream of higher education a possibility. This program is organized by Harvard Clubs around the country; their volunteers work in collaboration with school district superintendents, principals and guidance counselors to identify students who would benefit from this program. Ideally, ECA will provide knowledge of the resources available to students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may be the first in their families to attend college.

The ECA program is typically organized as a Saturday half-day event. Event organization differs amongst participating Clubs, but typically consists of: a student panel of current college students from the area who express the exciting experience of attending college and the opportunities it may provide; a financial aid presentation for parents explaining resources available to assist with making college affordable; a guidance counselor presentation detailing curricular and standardized test requirements for applying to college; and a keynote inspirational speaker. All participants are served lunch with beverages. Additional assistance provided at some events includes: real-time translation in Spanish and/or Mandarin Chinese, transportation assistance and on-site babysitting as needed.

Last year, 11 Harvard Clubs participated in the ECA program and over 20 events were held. These events attracted from 30 to 300 attendees; the largest program encompassed all schools in its district. Regional Clubs participating in this year's program are listed below. In addition, Clubs in New Jersey, Rhode Island, Southern California, and St. Louis, MO are striving to organize for the near future.

Baltimore, MD	Long Island, NY	San Antonio, TX
Chicago, IL	Minneapolis, MN	San Francisco, CA
Cleveland, OH	New York City	Washington, DC
Fall River, MA	Salt Lake City, UT	Westchester, NY

For information on this program, please visit our informational website <http://ecaprogram.wordpress.com/> or contact me directly to learn how to organize an ECA program in your area.

Regards,
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